

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SES-02 SSM-03 SAA-01 IO-13
HA-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
AID-05 OMB-01 ACDA-12 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 MCT-02
NEAE-00 /112 W

-----121004 171359Z /46

O P 171231Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9279
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4777

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION: AUGUST 17, 1978 - 1500 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 4741 (DTG 161400Z AUG 78)

1. SITUATION IN BEIRUT. EAST BEIRUT CEASE-FIRE CONTINUES TO HOLD.
TRAFFIC IN THE EASTERN PART OF THE CITY AS WELL AS BETWEEN THE
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EASTERN AND WESTERN PARTS OF THE CITY HAS INCREASED CONSIDER-
ABLY. ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 16, SYRIANS WITHDREW FROM THEIR
POSITIONS ON THE QARANTINA BRIDGE, AS CALLED FOR IN THE AUGUST
9 AGREEMENT, ALTHOUGH SYRIAN SOLDIERS REMAINED IN BUILDINGS WITH-
IN 200 METERS OF THE BRIDGE.

2. SOLDIERS IN KAWKABA. ONLY ABOUT 150 LEBANESE SOLDIERS REMAIN

IN THE KAWKABA AREA. THE REMAINING 450 HAVE WITHDRAWN NORTH TO ABLAH AND RASHAYYA AL WADI, ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES.

3. UNCOMPROMISING CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS.

A. DESPITE THE APPARENT PROGRESS BEING MADE IN EAST BEIRUT, CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE MAINTAINING A GENERALLY UNCOMPROMISING PUBLIC POSTURE. ACCORDING TO THE RIGHT-WING DAILY AL-BAYRAQ, PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL EMERGED PESSIMISTIC AFTER MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS AT BAABDA ON AUGUST 16. (PIERRE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS ELDEST SON, DEPUTY AMINE GEMAYEL.)

B. ACCORDING TO THE PAPER, THE PHALANGE LEADER CONCLUDED THAT THE SECURITY MEASURES TO WHICH SYRIA HAS AGREED "ARE NOTHING BUT A TRUCE", BECAUSE DAMASCUS WAS SETTING POLITICAL CONDITIONS AS THE PREREQUISITE TO A DURABLE SETTLEMENT, I.E., REBUILDING THE ARMY, AND THE FORMULATION OF A NEW ELECTION LAW. ON A SOMEWHAT MORE CONCILIATORY NOTE, GEMAYEL WAS QUOTED BY THE NEWSPAPER AS SAYING THE EXTENSION OF THE MANDATE OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE "NEEDS MORE STUDY."

C. THE SAME DAY, NLP LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN TOLD REPORTERS THAT THERE CAN BE NO "POLITICAL SOLUTIONS" IN LEBANON UNTIL ALL NON-LEBANESE ARMED FORCES HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY. HE SAID THERE COULD BE NO RENEWAL OF THE ADF'S MANDATE, ALTHOUGH THE SOLDIERS COULD LEAVE LEBANON GRADUALLY.

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4. FRANJIYAH TO SYRIA. FORMER PRESIDENT SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH MET THE MORNING OF AUGUST 16 WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS. HE THEN LEFT BAABDA FOR LATAKIA, WHERE HE WILL MEET WITH SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD. FRANJIYAH'S VISIT TO THE PALACE IS THE FIRST TIME HE HAS LEFT NORTH LEBANON SINCE HIS SON TONY WAS KILLED BY PHALANGISTS ON JUNE 13.

5. ATTACK IN RAYFOUN. ON AUGUST 16 PHALANGIST MILITIAMEN OCCUPIED THE HOME OF BUSINESSMAN HENRI SFEIR, A FRIEND OF CAMILLE CHAMOUN, IN THE MOUNTAIN RESORT OF RAYFOUN, ACCORDING TO THE RESPECTED MIDDLE EAST REPORTER. THE MILITIAMEN REPORTEDLY HELD SFEIR AND THIRTEEN OF HIS SUPPORTERS CAPTIVE FOR SEVERAL HOURS. THE PHALANGE PARTY ISSUED A STATEMENT SAYING THE INCIDENT FOLLOWED THE KILLING OF A PHALANGIST AND THE WOUNDING OF ANOTHER BY SFIER'S SUPPORTERS.

6. MORE ON FAKHANI EXPLOSION. PALESTINE AL-THAWRA ON AUGUST 16 ACCUSED U.S. AND ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE AGENTS OF SETTING OFF THE EXPLOSION WHICH DESTROYED A NINE STORY BUILDING IN THE FAKHANI AREA OF WEST BEIRUT LAST WEEKEND. THE PAPER CALLED THE "SABOTAGE" PART OF THE "INFERNAL DESIGN" AGAINST THE PALESTINE

REVOLUTION. ACCORDING TO AS SAFIR, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED
IN THE BLAST HAS RISEN TO 155.

7. FATAH-PFLP MEETING. LEADERS FROM FATAH AND THE REJECTIONIST
POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE (PFLP) MET HERE ON
AUGUST 16 IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE PALESTINIAN DIFFERENCES, ACCORD-
ING TO AN NAHAR. THE MEETING WAS IN PREPARATION FOR A PLANNED
SESSION IN DAMASCUS ON AUGUST 22 OF THE PALESTINIAN CENTRAL
COUNCIL, THE PAPER SAID.
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